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E. L YODER, - Managing Editor.
H. R. HOLSINGER, Corresponding Ed.

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Sharp's Logic vs. Annual Meeting Law.

We published in a former issue of the EVANGELIST, a correspondence from Elder Swihart, giving an extract of a letter by Prof. S. Z. Sharp, of Mt. Morris, Ill., an elder in the German Baptist fraternity, written to Elder E. B. Shaver, of Virginia, wherein the learned professor attempts to enlighten (?) the Virginia brother, (who has been having some trouble with mandatory minutes, rules and regulations in their relation to himself and his rights in the Gospel,) with the not altogether lucid logic that the said minutes of Annual Meeting are virtually dead and defunct by virtue of the fact that the revised minutes of 1883 failed to pass, and were therefore not "passed." Now this is a question in which the true Brethren church is deeply interested. Upon its truth or falsity depends the salvation of its members, from a German Baptist standpoint. It is true we as Brethren never did consider the said minutes anything but dead letters and are looking to Christ for salvation, but we are bound to respect the opinions of others as well as our own, and we are agreed that our lost condition from the above standpoint, however unstable, shall at least receive respectful and conscientious consideration. And then there are other and weightier considerations that enter into the investigation of this question. One is the fact that it is our duty under the Gospel to relieve every soul burdened with error where it is within our power to do so. Our friends of the opposition occupy a very unenviable position in their relation to us. They certainly cannot feel good in the belief that many men and women with whom they formerly fraternized in Christian fellowship should now be eternally lost. And this classification includes in many instances those who are bound to them by the hallowed ties of consanguity, and filial affection. Another is that this belief entertained by them is productive of many disgraceful and unchristian actions, such as locking church doors against those who helped to build them and who believe they have a just right to worship there, and must needs look upon such transactions with mingled feelings of injured rights, sorrow and disgust. Hearts have been made to bleed over the spectacle of seeing the once cherished doctrines of non resistance and gospel equity of the Dunkard church, ruthlessly trampled in the dust by its professed members resorting to violent measures to secure questionable rights.

We therefore enter into the investigation of this question with all seriousness and with a strong inclination to give what aid we can to Professor Sharp's view of this question. That is to say, if we find that the Professor's logic is logic indeed, we want to sustain him. It is in the line of our interests and inclination, as well as duty, to do so. Now for the investigation of this question. First, what are the facts in the case? The church, about one hundred and ten or fifteen years ago, commenced holding annual meetings, and, after the manner of deliberative bodies kept a minute of their proceedings from year to year. About the year 1850 these minutes were gathered into a book and called a Cyclopedia, or Encyclopedia, or something of that kind. At a later date the annual meeting itself authorized a publication of all the minutes in book form to be called the book of minutes. Many at this time began to look upon these minutes as being clothed with the dignity of inspiration and worthy to be classed with the book of books. Others, however, maintained that they contained only human thoughts and declarations and were only worthy of a corresponding influence and respect by those who lived in an age of free thought and enlightened investigation. These conflicting views were finally put to a test by the A. M. of 1882, at which time the minutes were declared mandatory. A revision of the minutes was called for, also, at this time, and a committee of revision appointed. This committee, two years later, presented the result of their deliberations, abridgements and amendments, to the Annual Meeting for ratification or rejection, and they were ingloriously rejected.

Now, the above is a brief statement of the facts upon which the professor bases his logic, by which he arrived at the conclusion that the minutes are "virtually dead." It seems to us it is a question of parliamentary usage rather than a question in logic. But we fail to discover anything in parliamentary usage that justifies such a conclusion. We never heard of any rule, governing legislative bodies, where the failure to repeal, amend or abridge, a law or code of laws, virtually repealed the original law or code of laws. But we remember that Annual Meeting is not governed by parliamentary rules, and herein, we suspect lies the foundation of the Professor's logic. It would be stated in the form of a syllogism thus:

According to parliamentary usage the failure to pass the revised minutes would leave the old minutes with their mandatory enactments in full force.

But Annual Meeting is not governed by parliamentary rules, hence,

The failure to pass the revised minutes has repealed the old minutes and they are now virtually dead.

Now, we would be content with this conclusion if it were sustained by facts. If the theory of the minutes being virtually dead were generally accepted as a fact by the German Baptist Brotherhood we would rest content and be happy in the contemplation of the blessed results that would follow. But unfortunately we have before us information that leads us to believe that the minutes are not "virtually" dead, but only theoretically dead—as it were. It is reported to us from Elder Sharp's own congregation that an attempt was made to install a minister, lately, who had been duly elected according to the rules of the church, but, on his refusal to promise to conform with the teachings of Annual Meeting on the subject of dress, his installation was indefinitely postponed. Elder Sharp and a majority of the church were willing that he should be ordained upon the theory that the minutes were "virtually dead," but the adjoining elders, among whom was the moderator of Annual Meeting, said no! it must not be done in violation of the minutes.

Such things as these perplex us, and the heart becomes sick with hope deferred, and we turn with joy and gladness to the little church which has been organized upon a gospel basis and will afford a safe refuge for all who are weary of this annual meeting yoke which has no living connection with the divine word, and, if not virtually, theoretically or logically dead, should at least be buried so deep that no power on earth could ever resurrect it. And there is no danger that Divine power would ever interfere to raise it from the grave.

Footwashing after Supper.

Another part of this paper contains an article by brother John Milton, of California, on the subject of observing Footwashing after the Supper, which no doubt, is the expression of his honest conviction.

There are Christian bodies found in several localities of this country, who entertain the same view on this subject, and put it into practice by keeping the footwashing after the meal. We concede to our California brother, and all others, the same honesty and desire to follow the Master, that we assume for ourselves; yet we differ, and as we have, with pleasure, given him space to express himself, we trust that our views will be received in the same Christian spirit in which they are given, as we inquire after the scriptural and other evidence that will apply to the subject.

The footwashing which Christ engaged in was evidently performed before the meal. The fact is apparent in the thirteenth chapter of St. John's gospel, in the customs of that day, and in the data that can be drawn from the church history of the past.

It should be remembered that the commencement of the chapter mentioned, begins the third main part of the gospel of John, setting forth the glorification of Christ as the suffering High Priest and the victorious King; and that the first three verses of the chapter are an epitome, or a summary of the scenes of that glorification. Before the feast of the Passover, He knew what His experience should be; He loved his own who were in the world unto the end; He was betrayed by one of His chosen number; He recognized the truth that all things were placed into His hands: and as an appropriate conclusion, St. John declares that he came from God and went to God. Every expounder of the Scripture should be careful not to confound this preface, John 13: 1, 2, 3, to the last section of the book, with the subject matter proper, and draw conclusions from it to establish an order for observing ordinances of God's house. The footwashing narrative commences with John 13: 4: "He riseth from supper," although it may be regarded as the conclusion of the first sentence of the chapter.

Jesus did not wash feet after supper because the order of the historical account places it before.

He did not wash feet after supper because Judas was one of the number present when the exercise took place, and he left the room before the eating was concluded; for he was the unclean indicated by Jesus in his remark, "And ye are clean but not all."

He did not wash feet after supper because he rose from the supper, as a literal translation would give it, and this phrase, in the accurate use of language can mean nothing more than to leave a supper uneaten. On that ocasion the supper was prepared sometime before the guests all arrived, and as they entered the room, they promiscuously reclined, and awaited the order which would point out the person who was to perform the menial service of washing the feet of the party. Without making any remarks, Jesus rose from the supper that was there ready to be eaten, instead of with supper or after supper, and commenced to wash feet.

Because there would be a monstrous inconsistency in Jesus breaking his own body to Peter as spiritual food, and giving him His blood to drink, and then declaring to him, "If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me."

In the lives of Abraham and Lot, the footwashing came before the meal.

In the days of the Savior the footwashing was ordinarily done by slaves previous to the commencement of the meal.

The Church at Milan, which was organized in the primitive times of Christianity, has kept the footwashing to this day, and observed it before the Lord's Supper.

Every trace of the practice in the history of the early church, as far as our investigation reaches, supports the practice of observing the footwashing before the meal, and thus the Brethren generally, practice it, as following the Master in his own example, who "loved himself to death."

Dynamite.

A great sensation has been created throughout the civilized world, by the news from London that the dynamite conspirators have succeeded in producing an explosion in the House of Parliament, the White Tower and Westminster Hall. The action of the conspirators is almost universally condemned by the public journals, and we fall in line, as publishers of a religious paper, with our condemnation against plots so ruinous to property and destructive of human life. But while we thus denounce the action of dynamite warriors, we beg liet to enter our protest against war in general, and are not willing to hold up the dynamiters to special execration while we would allow the advocates of war and bloodshed as a natural right and religious duty to escape reprimand. England with her forts and arsenals stored with implements of death and destruction, backed up with her powerful navy and standing army, ready to kill, conquer and destroy her defenseless victims, as her avarice and ambition may dictate, has no reason to complain when her subjects to redress either a real or imaginary wrong proceed, as they have done, to avenge their wrongs by the use of the deadly and destructive dynamite.

Will they stigmatize the actions of the dynamiters as cowardly? We deny. The carrying out of such plots requires boldness and bravery that stands unchallenged in the art of warfare. Will they characterize them as secret plots and conspiracies worthy only of condemnation? We answer, your warfare too, abounds in secret plots and conspiracies, and there is no difference in this respect between your tactics and theirs. Will you say that these explosives endanger the lives of the innocent? We answer, your mode of warfare does the same. Even your own soldiers are drafted into your armies and are compelled to sacrifice their lives on the altar of your covetousness and ambition. In this respect the dynamite warriors have not even rivaled you in the sacrifice of innocent life, for it is evident that their warriors are all volunteers. And we say, further, that your standing armies whereby you appropriate the best part of the young man's life, to train him for works of blood and butchery, death and devastation, has much to do towards training your subjects for the work which your public press now so vehemently denounces. You are sowing the wind and are reaping the whirlwind.

And again, we feel constrained to remind England, along with all advocates of war, that by the arbitrament of the sword, questions are not settled by any other standard than the standard of *might*. But if you choose to deny this and say that the Almighty interferes in behalf of truth and justice, we answer, then beware! Spare your criticisms, withhold your execrations against the dynamite warriors. God may be on their side as well as on the side of those whom they consider their oppressors, and if He can justify your mode of warfare, he can just as easily justify theirs. There is no difference in principle only as it balances in their favor. We, therefore, insist, that all those who are shocked at the destruction of life and property of dynamite warfare, will, to be consistent, join with us in classing it along with all other warfare of the carnal weapon, and denounce it as antagonistic to the Christian religion and the higher civilization which it teaches.

A strange religious frenzy is now prevailing in Hartford City, Ind. The leader is a woman named Maria B. Woodworth. The mourners seem to fall into a trance, and many strange things happen to them. Whether any good will come from it, remains to be seen.

Rev. R. Heber Newton, a celebrated divine of New York, is again in the toils for preaching against the accepted doctrine of the Trinity and original sin.